

# **MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

## **OCTOBER 15, 2007**

### **MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria**

**PRESENT:** Doug Sweet (Acting Chair), Jane Brown, Rob Caruso, Herb Cole, Linda Hiller, Rosemary Larking, Barbara Lischinsky, Girard Plante, Heather Platt, Jason Rosenberg,  
**REGRETS:** Lucie Chansky, Jini Fairley, Jeff Hutter, Janna Zwerner  
**STAFF:** Beverly Droz, Lowell Haynes  
**GUESTS:** Richard Moynihan (St. Ignatius), Sister Diane Vallerio (St. Ignatius), Trisha Guditz (Housing)

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The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm and was chaired by Douglas Sweet, Acting Chair.  
The guests were welcomed.

#### **The minutes of the 9/17/07 meeting were accepted.**

#### **HP Parking:**

##### **I. Sheldon Brown's request revisited**

Background: At the 9/17/07 meeting, we had heard from Mr. Brown of 384 Linwood Avenue that due to his disability he wanted a HP space in front of his house. It is difficult to keep moving the vehicles in the driveway to accommodate access to his vehicle. Currently there is no parking on the street in front of his house between 8am to 3pm on school days and across the street there is 2 hour parking between 8am to 3pm on school days. It was suggested that Mr. Brown contact his Alderman if he wants the no parking ban lifted.

Lowell hadn't been at the September meeting and brought up Mr. Brown's request of 385 Linwood Ave. Lowell had spoken with Clint Schuckel who said the no parking could be changed depending on the volume of traffic flow. Lowell had had Herb do observation visits. He handed out a summary report of the traffic flow. Herb went to the site 5 times between 11:30 am and 2:40 pm on different days and did not observe much traffic. Lowell said the Traffic Council can now make the decision to change the no parking or hourly limits. MCPD can recommend to the Traffic council that they change the hourly limit. Doug said Mr. Brown had not made a compelling case. Other members agreed. It was decided to drop the matter until or unless Mr. Brown contacts the Committee again.

##### **II. St. Ignatius Church**

Guests from St. Ignatius Church included: Sister Diane Vallerio and Richard Moynihan, the Parish Business manager. They have a very active parish and are growing. They have 2300 people worshipping every weekend. They have many services every week-end as well as other services such as weddings, funerals etc.

The church has 2 parking spaces on Commonwealth Ave. It is about 100 steps to the entrance. In the lower lot, there are 2 HP spaces. It is about 200 steps to the accessible entrance. It is too steep to go up directly to the closest entrance. They have made many accessibility improvements but there are a lot of limitations. The church has put in ramps and handicapped lifts but this is not enough to accommodate the number of people with mobility and accessibility issues.

There is 1 curb cut on Commonwealth Ave between the 2 existing HP spaces. If another 2 spaces were added we'd need to add another curb cut. The existing curb cut needs to be replaced anyway since it is in terrible condition.

Lowell said there is a lot of traffic congestion. The BC T stop is diagonally across the street. There is no parking east bound in front of the 2 existing HP spaces. Lowell suggested moving the spaces 5 feet forward and adding two more behind the existing. Doug asked if by moving them up some footage, would the area lose 2 regular parking spaces or just one. He wants to minimize the impact on regular parking.

Mr. Moynihan said there are a number of regular parking spaces near by. The University clears out near by parking lots by 4pm Saturday through 7pm on Sunday.

Jason suggested a shadow lane for people to pull off Commonwealth Ave and park. It is a limited sidewalk area and would have to be pursued with DPW. Rob said better signage is needed. The church would be happy to learn how to pursue that and make the signage happen.

Rosemary inquired about the interior. They have made places in the sanctuary for wheelchairs and renovated bathrooms. Also they have a ramp on the BC side of the building and have made the Commonwealth Ave. entrance flush with the sidewalk so that both entrances are accessible. Doug called for more questions of the guests. Hearing none he thanked them for coming and they thanked MCPD for our consideration.

There was discussion. Herb made a **motion** that 2 more HP spaces be added to the existing 2 spaces and the spaces be placed to try to minimize the impact on the regular parking spaces. It was seconded and approved.

### **Architectural Access Compliance**

We welcomed Trisha Guditz, Housing Officer, Planning and Development Department and staff to Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF).

She is just starting work on Fair Housing action plan. The City is the recipient of a federal grant. While we don't have to submit reports to HUD we do let them know we've done them. She had made a 1<sup>st</sup> draft and wanted to come to the MCPD immediately to have us know about it and have input into it. Regarding Architectural Access compliance, there is a recommendation that all involved departments will meet in a training to be better equipped to handle such issues.

There is more work to be done around Fair Housing education. They are working with realtors to have them know about Fair Housing lending and mortgage practices. This is the first step over the next 6 months or so, and she wants us to feel free to give ideas and information.

Rosemary said many realtors do not even recognize people's needs. Her experience is that they don't call back. They don't offer alternative meeting sites if they office is not accessible. Jason said many realtors don't have staff people that are knowledgeable about these issues. He said some hot line is needed. Lowell and Trisha said they've had a realtor training but not enough people attended. They want a continuing education credit if realtors attend, but it gets complex to organize this. Rob suggested contacting the Mass Registration and Licensing Board, and working through them to determine the standards of continuing education credits. They have many sections. The FHTF may be able to piggy back on the rental or sales sections. Rosemary said most of the forms don't mention anything about what a person needs in the way of accessibility. Heather suggested the realtors need a training session as part of their licensing.

Linda said in Newton we have the Disability Awareness Institute, part of the Understanding Our Differences Programs. They do programs for businesses, etc. and could present a program to the realtors. There was a discussion on how such courses could be made available and what the process is to devise the needed testing.

Lowell said that we've been concerned with the Architectural Access issues especially as it relates to getting building permits and having follow-up inspections. Inspectional Services (ISD) has hired a part time person to deal with access regulations.

Bev and Doug will be attending a meeting tomorrow (Oct. 16) which will include Planning & Development Commissioner Kruse, ISD Commissioner Lojek, housing staff and leadership of the Fair Housing Task Force. The purpose will be to discuss these issues and the plan for the training for staff of the involved city departments.

The Committee thanked Trisha for her time and information.

### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

#### **Warren House:**

Rosemary would like MCPD to send a letter to Jan Strickland, NCDF, for the time and patience they spent to assist Rosemary Larking in getting housing there, and in making accommodations for her. Jason said Rosemary has seen the best and the worst in realtors as she moved and NCDF has exhibited the best. He also noted the Newton Housing Authority deserved kudos. They stood by holding apartments open, and being as supportive and constructive as possible. Doug will draft a letter to NCDF.

#### **Unique Nails Salon:**

Bev reported that Ms. Kim Nguyen from Unique Nails Salon of West Newton called recently. She wanted us to know that they had never made any changes to their entrance or the thresh-hold, so they were perplexed by our 1st letter this summer. Upon receiving the 2nd letter that Bev sent after the last MCPD meeting, Ms. Nguyen contacted a building inspector who did tell her the thresh-hold was too high and he suggested she have it fixed. She stated she had a carpenter come to fix it, and she believes the front entrance should be accessible for anyone in a wheelchair. Lowell said they didn't lower it. They added some cement substance to level it so it is extended about 6-8" into the sidewalk. It should accommodate a wheelchair. Rosemary may visit it again.

#### **Bank of America (corner of Centre & Beacon Sts.):**

As noted last month, Rosemary reported that she can get into cubicle but not into the office. But the office is the manager's office and therefore does not have to be accessible. However, Rosemary states that the cubicles do not allow for private conversations. The bank staff should then provide some accessible space for a private meeting.

There was further discussion about the height of the cubicle and what can be heard. The issue remains. Jason said the bank should be able to accommodate a customer in a private area. It may be reasonable to widen the door to the manager's office. Bev asked if we could write a letter as we have to other businesses. There was discussion on what the door width should be (32") and the tenor of the letter. Doug will write it.

#### **Citizen's Bank (1188 Centre Street):**

Rosemary reported that the lower teller's window finally has the international symbol but there is never staff there when she is there. Lowell has been there and had spoken to the manager who says there is staff there sometimes and if not, there is staff at the information booth and they will come to help. Rosemary asked about the automatic door opener. Lowell reported that we had strongly suggested they comply, but the weight pull is still high.

#### **Arborpoint at Woodland Station:**

Several members are going on October 17 at 3pm to to meet with Kristen Finacom, the Property Manager and make a site visit. Barbara said there are no HP spaces for visitors and she received notice that there is no visitor parking on Wednesday. She's hoping to work on it.

### **Walgreen's on Langley Road:**

Rob made a site visit and counted 78 parking spaces side and rear. According to AAB Law they need 4 HP spaces and they currently have 2 terrible spaces. Rob had previously been to the Walgreen's at 4 Corners and brought their parking situation to the manager's attention and they changed it. The Committee asked Rob if he was willing to ask the Langley Road manager if their store would comply as well. There was discussion about how difficult it is to get help from the staff in the stores. There has been turnover of managers several times recently at the Newton Centre location.

### **Newton Centre Green:**

Linda reported that the aisle from the HP spaces to the Newton Centre green was blocked by some trash cans during the Harvest Fair weekend. She mentioned it to a policeman and he immediately moved them.

### **CDBG ACCESS PROJECTS REPORT for Sept. by Lowell**

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for their review. Per usual it is copied here within the minutes. In these minutes, any additional comments follow the report.

○ **Accessible Pedestrian Signals** (Project CD0703C. Expended, \$25,015; Budget balance: \$19,813) – The Committee has requested the installation of APS-10 audible pedestrian signals at the intersections of Walnut and Cabot, Beacon and Chestnut, and Adams and Watertown. Estimated hardware costs for each of these three intersections is \$1,400. Regarding the intersection of Centre St. and Centre Ave., we are hoping to pool our CDBG access funds with the Newton Corner CDBG neighborhood funds to improve the pedestrian crossings at this intersection. The neighborhood advisory committee will hire an engineering firm to recommend specific improvements. Our hope is to initiate independent crossing signals for the two streets, straighten the crosswalk across Centre St., and move the vehicle stop line before the crosswalk. The intersection would be best served by Polara Navigator signals because of ambient sound control and beaconing capabilities. Concerning the Washington St. and Commonwealth Ave. intersection, the Board of Aldermen has asked for design recommendations from a consultant, VHB Engineering. The intersection will be improved using \$90,000 contributed by National Development and Newton-Wellesley Hospital. The project should include accessible pedestrian signals.

The Accessible Pedestrian Signals project is currently inactive. The Department of Public Works says that they have insufficient funds to pay for installation costs in the coming year. (Expected Date of Completion: none.)

○ **Wellington Park Access** (Project CD0303C. Expended, \$0; Committed, \$10,000; Budget balance, \$0) – This project is a joint project using CDBG funds and Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. The CDBG portion of the project is almost complete. It consists of an asphalt walkway providing an accessible route from the park entrance on Kilburn Street, past the basketball and tennis courts, then to the park entrance on Princess Road. The part of our project that remains unfinished is the construction of the area where two benches will be installed. *The CPA portion of the work was delayed because of disagreement among residents regarding the location of additional walkways in the park. (EDC: November 2007)*

○ **Benches** (Project CD0403C. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$3,000) – No change. The current budget will be limited to installation of benches at Wellington Park when our construction of walkways in the park is completed. (EDC: October 2007)

○ **Curb Cuts** (Project CD0803G. Expended, \$0; Committed, \$155,000; Budget Balance: \$2,829) – The Dept. of Public Works is moving ahead on this project with a crew that will be concentrating on CDBG projects, primarily curb cuts. They have completed more than 20 of the 53 curb cuts on our list.

Four other curb cuts are being constructed as part of a raised intersection at Woodland Road and Lake Avenue. We will contribute to the City's cost for these curb cuts. Many of our other locations are on Woodland Road from Hancock Street to Windermere Road. The curb cut at the accessible gazebo on Albemarle Road should also be completed. We also hope to construct the needed curb cuts at the intersection of Boylston St. and Hammond Pond Parkway when state approval is received. We are still expanding our list of curb cuts to be done in 2007. Mayor's Committee members are still encouraged to report priority locations for needed curb cuts. (*Expected Date of Completion: None. On-going work.*)

○ **Public Facilities and Parks Access** (Project CD0703A. Expended, \$9,168; Committed, \$30,000; Budget balance, \$28,882) – The first project completed under this budget was the construction of two sets of stairs in Burr Park by DPW and the installation of railings on all three sets of stairs in the park. *This project is now completed.*

The second project under this budget is the construction of the accessible walkway from the Mason-Rice School parking lot to the planned accessible play area within the Newton Centre Playground. The project is being managed by the Dept. of Parks and Recreation and carried out by the Dept. of Public Works. *Work has been completed on the section of the walkway from the school parking lot to the brook.* The remaining portion of the walkway beyond the brook will be completed following the installation of the new play area. There will be approximately \$29,000 remaining in this budget following the completion of the Newton Centre Playground walkway. *We can assign these remaining funds to a public facilities or parks project at any time.* There is a potential long-term request from the Dept. of Parks and Recreation for accessibility improvements at the Newton Highlands Playground and Upper Falls Playground. (EDC: none)

○ **FY08 Uncommitted Funds** (Project CD0803A. Expended, \$0; Committed, \$0; Budget balance, \$86,470) – *This represents funds available for project(s) to be determined.* Because of the on-going need for accessible curb cuts, this budget is a logical source for applying to future curb cut construction. *I recommend that the Committee allocate \$50,000 from this budget for additional curb cuts to be done next spring.*

## **DISCUSSION**

Lowell presented the above CDBD report and reminded the Committee that it was important to allocate some of the uncommitted funds to curb cuts for next year. A **motion** was made that \$25K of the \$86 uncommitted funds be allocated to curb cuts for the remainder of FY08. The motion passed unanimously.

Jason said that we need to keep tabs on curb cuts on state property. If they're not taken care of, we might consider adding them to our lists. All sites should be given to Lowell so we can consolidate and track our list. Lowell stated as per an earlier email that DPW has limited budget and will not be able to pay APS installation costs. DPW is looking at the intersection of Washington St. and Commonwealth Avenue, which is coincidentally one of MCPD sites that we would want to be completed. Lowell thinks DPW is hiring a consultant to help with these various traffic designs. Lowell was asked to get contact information for the consultant.

Heather asked about the status of funding for the intersections of Walnut and Cabot Ave, Beacon and Chestnut Ave and Adams and Watertown Streets. Lowell said installation cost is about \$100 per signal which averages \$400 per intersection.

Bev will set a meeting with David Turocy for the MCPD to discuss both APS and snow removal. Heather asked that the meeting be after 3pm Monday through Friday. Doug, Heather, Barbara, Lowell and Bev are interested in attending. Jason said that if we get to a point where recognize that the city can not afford certain things then we need to reconsider funding.

**Motion to adjourn at 9:00 pm.**

**The next meeting will be November 19 at 6:30pm in the cafeteria.**